

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 INR-05 CIAE-00 SSO-00 NSC-05

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1562

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 0090

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, VN, VS

SUBJECT: NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE AGAINST PHUOC LONG PROVINCE

REF : (A) SAIGON 0044; (B) SAIGON 0089

1. THE GVN IS MAKING A MAJOR EFFORT TO CALL ATTENTION TO CURRENT NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE AGAINST PHUOC LONG PROVINCE AND ITS CAPITAL. NOTE HAS BEEN SENT TO PARTICIPANTS IN PARIS CONFERENCE ON VIETNAM (REF A) AND A SPECIAL LETTER HAS BEEN SENT TO ICCS. ON JANUARY 2 THE GVN DELEGATION TO THE TPJMC SENT A NOTE TO "PRG" DELEGATION ASKING FOR A MEETING TO WORK OUT A FORMULA TO SUPPLY FOOD AND ASSISTANCE TO WOUNDED CIVILIANS IN SONG BE BUT "PRG" REJECTED NOTE. MEETING OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WAS BRIEFED ON SITUATION AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 3 AND A FORMAL GVN DECLARATION DISTRIBUTED AT THAT TIME (REF B). A PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWED LATER IN AFTERNOON.

2. WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT A HIGHLY PLACED DEPARTMENT OFFICER OR DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN MAKE PUBLIC COMMENT SUPPORTING GVN IN THIS MATTER. WE BELIEVE IT HIGHLY IMPORTANT THAT THE US, A SIGNATORY TO AND STRONG UPHOLDER OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT, NOT REMAIN SILENT WHILE HANOI PROCEEDS WITH THIS  
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MOST MASSIVE OFFENSIVE AGAINST SVN SINCE THE AGREEMENT WAS

SIGNED. NOT ONLY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR THE PUBLIC TO BE AWARE OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS; DRAWING ATTENTION TO THE SITUATION IN PHUOC LONG IS ALSO THE MOST TELLING ANSWER TO HANOI'S NOISY PROPAGANDA THAT THE U.S. AND THE GVN ARE "SABOTAGING" THE PARIS AGREEMENT. FOLLOWING POINTS COULD BE MADE:

3. ATTACK ON PHUOC LONG IS THE SHARPEST ESCALATION IN THE FIGHTING BY NORTH VIETNAM SINCE THE SIGNING OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT. NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS ARE USING LARGE NUMBER OF TANKS, ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS AND OTHER SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS. NORTH VIETNAM'S OFFENSIVE IN PHUOC LONG PROVINCE, JUST THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE AGREEMENT, BELIES HANOI'S CLAIMS THAT IT IS THE U.S. AND REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM WHO ARE VIOLATING THE AGREEMENT AND STANDING IN THE WAY OF PEACE IN VIETNAM. THE U.S. DEPLORES NORTH VIETNAM'S TURNING FROM THE PATH OF NEGOTIATIONS TO THAT OF VIOLENCE AND WAR NOT ONLY BECAUSE IT IS A GRAVE BREACH OF THE AGREEMENT BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF THE CRUEL PRICE BEING PAID BY THE CIVILIAN POPULATION OF SVN. WE JOIN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM IN DECRYING THE NEEDLESS LOSS OF LIFE CAUSED BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ATTACKS AND STRONGLY SUPPORT THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM'S APPEAL TO THE OTHER SIDE TO REOPEN THE BILATERAL TALKS IN PARIS AND SAIGON WHICH ARE PROVIDED FOR BY THE PARIS AGREEMENT.

4. IN ADDITION DEPARTMENT MIGHT NOTE THAT DURING THE MONTH OF DECEMBER THERE HAS BEEN FREQUENT NORTH VIETNAMESE SHELLING OF TAY NINH CITY, THE SEAT OF THE HOLY SEE OF THE CAO DAI RELIGION. TEN PERSONS HAVE BEEN KILLED, 25 WOUNDED AND 21 HOUSES DESTROYED. ACCORDING TO VIETNAM PRESS THE GVN HAS PROTESTED THIS SHELLING TO UNESCO. (AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, CAO DAI HOLY SEE IN TAY NINH IS REGARDED BY VIETNAMESE AS ONE OF SOUTH VIETNAM'S RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL TREASURES.) MOST RECENTLY A BUDDHIST TEMPLE IN TAY NINH WAS DESTROYED BY ARTILLERY FIRE.

5. IF DEPARTMENT NOT PREPARED TO ANSWER INTERFAITH GROUP'S DECEMBER 22 "PASTORAL LETTER" DIRECTLY, WE SUGGESTED THAT SPOKESMAN MAY WISH TO POINT OUT THAT TAY NINH SHELLINGS SHOW CLEARLY WHO IT IS WHO IS RAINING DESTRUCTION ON THE POPULATION CENTERS AND THE RELIGIOUS SHRINES OF SOUTH VIETNAM. SPOKES-  
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MAN MIGHT SUGGEST THAT INTERFAITH GROUP AND ALL OTHERS INTERESTED IN HALTING WAR'S DESTRUCTION IN SOUTH VIETNAM MAKE APPEAL TO COMMUNISTS TO CEASE THEIR OFFENSIVE AND RETURN TO NEGOTIATING TABLE.  
MARTIN

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